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## NEWS

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### **DEMA ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF NEW EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

*Testing scheduled Sept. 23-25*

Delaware Emergency Management Agency, the Division of Public Health and other communication center partners will test the new Delaware Emergency Notification System (DENS) in selected areas on Sept. 23, 24 and 25.

The system is fully operational for residents and businesses that have listed telephone numbers. Tests will consist of a recorded announcement explaining the nature of the call and that there is no need for action on the part of those receiving calls.

Arthur Paul, DEMA planner and project coordinator, said sections in each county and Wilmington will be chosen to receive test phone messages. He said the system allows emergency messages to be delivered to a person answering the phone or to an answering machine. It also bypasses “zapper” type phone devices that stop incoming computer-generated calls often used by telemarketers.

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Those who have unlisted phone numbers or use a cell phone as their primary phone may contact FirstCall Interactive Network, 866-484-3264, to register for the DENS list. The registration line is toll free and prompts callers through the registration process. There is no cost to register.

Paul said state officials hope that everyone who uses a cell phone for their household, or has an unlisted number will take advantage of the opportunity to be included on the DENS list. He said a street address is necessary for cell phone users, and only one phone number per address is permitted.

In addition to the State Emergency Operations Center and the Delaware State Police Communications Center in Smyrna, activating points for the DENS include the primary emergency 911 centers in each county and Wilmington, the Division of Public Health and local emergency operations centers in each county and Wilmington. Representatives of each of the partnering entities recently completed training with FirstCall instructors.

The Division of Public Health obtained a Center for Disease Control grant to fund installation of DENS and the first two years of maintenance. Maintenance costs are approximately \$80,000 a year. Activation of the system costs 25-30 cents per call.

The party responsible for the call, such as a chemical company experiencing problems potentially threatening to the public, pays the cost of calls.

When the system is activated, as many as 300 phone numbers can be dialed within one minute. DENS can provide emergency notification to the entire state or to an area as specifically defined as 10 houses on one street.

In recent training sessions, Donna Delatte, FirstCall, gave the example of a hostage situation where nine of 10 houses can be notified with the hostage location selected out in order not to alert the perpetrator.

Should an emergency event be an impending strong storm or a potentially contaminated water supply serving a large sector of the population, entire cities or counties can be notified at the rate of 3,000 every 10 minutes. Delaware will have the option of using pre-scripted messages created for generic use or of recording a message specific to an event.

Paul said the system can be activated by an authorized person contacting FirstCall around-the-clock operators, or by using a private internet network. Both methods require a confidential system of account numbers, user identifications and access code numbers.

DENS messages will include the name of the agency that activates the system, type of emergency, protective actions, if any, and resources for additional information. Appropriate Emergency Alert System radio stations and television stations will be listed.

For further information on the DENS, contact Arthur Paul, 659-3362; to register phone number and address, call FirstCall, 866-484-3264.

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